

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Safety Education Project
Concept Paper – Design Phase
Presented to IOWAccess Advisory Council
March 7, 2007

Project Sponsor:

Richard Leopold, Director, Iowa Department of Natural Resources_

Project Points-of-Contact:

Rod Slings, Recreational Safety Programs Supervisor (515/281-8652)

Megan Wisecup, Administrative Assistant, Law Enforcement Bureau (515/281-7828)

Goal:

This project will increase public access to safety education opportunities, improve registration services for students and volunteer instructors, and streamline data management processes.

Project Purpose:

The purpose of this project is to increase public access to safety education opportunities via the web. This request encompasses the designing of a cost-effective system that is user friendly for students as young as 12 years old as well as our seasoned volunteer instructors. Accurate, accessible data is one key to enhancing safe experiences for all Iowans who enjoy our natural resources.

This will be accomplished by transitioning to a dynamic web based system. Web access will be provided to the public, education program students, volunteer instructors and select DNR staff. This web based system will provide:

- Latest course information offered to students and instructors
- User-friendly registration for students to provide accurate information to register
- When a class is full, a student will be put on a waiting list, and then notified of an opening. In the case no openings, the student will be notified when another class will be offered
- Offer students the option to take home study courses online
- Offer student to pay class fees when they register
- Retain long-term verification of participation for student
- Linking mechanism to the existing ELSI (Electronic Licensing System for Iowa) for duplicate certification cards.
- The transfer of student data to ELSI and back to the appropriate education program in the database
- Solid platform for lifetime of licensing requirements and recreation opportunities

- Effectively capture data to meet Federal retention and grant reporting requirements by US Fish & Wildlife Service and US Coast Guard
- Link to the International Hunter Education Association Portal by zip code for a class search
- Support of \$400 million economic resource for Iowa from hunting

Background:

Hunter Education in Iowa dates back to 1960. It became mandatory in 1984. At this time approximately 465,000 students have successfully completed the course. As a result of the dedication by volunteers and guidance of the DNR, we have made hunting a very safe activity. This is one of the great success stories and largest program being taught by volunteers compared to any other. Worldwide 70,000 volunteers teach hunter education. Iowa has always been a leader in Hunter Education winning many awards by staff, volunteers and the program itself.

Note:

Youth licenses sales for age 15 and under for deer & turkey privileges:

- 2004 – 12,589
- 2005 – 13,299
- 2006 – 15,379

This increase shows the demand for the hunter education program. This is a positive sign, not only for the future of this technology, but for the future of safe hunting in Iowa.

Iowa law requires that anyone born after January 1, 1967 be certified in hunter education before they are eligible to purchase an Iowa hunting license. Often, pre-registration is required by contacting the volunteer instructor at home within restricted timeframes.

Hunters who need information must contact the DNR at the Wallace Building during regular business hours. In the weeks preceding and during the hunting season, an average of 600 phone calls per week is handled by the DNR Phone Center.

Capturing student data from hand-written class rosters involves data entry into mainframe programs. Rosters are retained to meet Federal program audit requirements. Researching issues now includes a manual search through these rosters. In the future, reports will be automatically generated through the system.

Educational courses occur in the classroom and via home study for hunters, boaters, fur harvesters, bow hunters, groomers, and all-terrain vehicle and snowmobile operation and safety. Other opportunities for the public include:

Outdoor Journey for Girls; Becoming an Outdoor Woman (BOW); Hunting & Conservation Camp (HACC); Youth Hunter Education Challenge (YHEC); Basic Archery Instructor (BAI) Classes; Basic Archery Instructor Trainers (BAIT) Classes, New Instructor Workshops; Certified Instructor Workshops; Instructor

Academy; Shooting Sports Classes (archery, rifle, shotgun); Paddle Sports Classes (canoeing & kayaking); Youth Hunting and Mentoring Opportunities.

These outreach programs provide Iowa citizens of all cultural and ethnic backgrounds to learn about Iowa's great outdoors. A number of these programs are very popular and are offered in a similar format to the Hunter Education Program, even though they do require different types of registration requirements.

During the planning phase of this project, it was determined that it would be best to incorporate other educational offerings into the system being planned and designed for Hunter Education. Therefore, the scope of the original Hunter Education project has been expanded to support all of the programs listed above.

Request:

\$50,000 for the design phase of this project. The cost estimates include:

- Cost for ITE to transfer mainframe data to the new database
- Cost associated with gathering Electronic Licensing System of Iowa (ELSI) data and populating their system.
- Completing mock-up screens (approximately 70)
- Report Definition Documents
- Preparation of the Implementation Funding Request

Key deliverables of the design phase will include, but not limited to:

- Participant database
- Web pages that allow students and the public to find a class and register on-line
- Automatic notification system for students and instructors.
- Get online training data from outside vendors that provide training services.
- Create system messages for communication between DNR staff and instructors and/or students.
- On-line registration
- Scheduled uploads of certification data to ELSI
- Long-term data retention cycle
- Link to International Hunter Education Portal zip code search of classes

We will be returning to IOWAccess in May to request funding for the implementation phase of the project.

Cost Avoidance:

Volunteer instructors will be able to approve student participation online, reducing time spent to complete and mail hand-written forms to the DNR. They will also be provided up front with the student's registration information so they will not have to collect it at the beginning of their class. This on-line process will improve accuracy and reduce lag time between the time of class completion and when the student receives the certification.

Lag time produces inquiries to the DNR, which would be eliminated under the new system.

Students will have 24-7 access to historical information to verify certification for out-of-state recreational opportunities or duplicate certification cards. They will avoid hold-time on the telephone during peak seasons, trips to the Wallace Building for inquiries, and waiting for research results of past records.

Public will have 24-7 access to the latest class schedules and registration information, minimizing telephone inquiries.

DNR support staff will spend less time handling phone calls and written requests, keying student data, and managing documents. On-line processing will minimize the potential for errors.

Project Funds:

IOWAccess funding will be required to accomplish the design and implementation phases for this project. No other funding is available through the DNR.

Interested Parties: Parties interested in this project include the following:

Parties interested in this project include the following:

- Safety education students
- Volunteer instructors (past, present & future)
- Iowa taxpayers
- Iowa small businesses
- License retailers
- Non-government organizations
- Recreational Users
- DNR counterparts in other states
- Iowa DNR Staff
- State Legislature

Some of the Recipients of this Service:

- Iowa's Recreational Users (nearly 3 million)
- Safety Education Students (15,000)
- Volunteer Instructors (2,000)
- License Retailers (950)
- DNR Staff (120+)